

WASHINGTON EARNINGS COMPARED TO THE U.S. AND OTHER WESTERN STATES: A REPORT BASED ON THE CENSUS

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Change in Total Earnings by Sex: Washington vs. the U.S. and Other Western States

By Erica Gardner

Using data from the 1990 and 2000 five percent Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), change in total earnings by sex were examined for all Washington and U.S. residents aged 18 to 64 (regardless of work status). With the exception of women's mean income in 1989, male and female Washington residents had higher mean and median earnings than U.S. residents as a whole. Between 1989 and 1999, Washington's male median earnings increased 15 percent compared to a 13 percent increase experienced among male U.S. residents. Male median earnings increased seven percent in Washington compared to one percent in the U.S. as a whole.

Women's earnings increased at a much faster rate than men's during this period. Women's mean earnings increased 33 percent in Washington State compared to a 28 percent increase in the U.S. overall. Similarly, women experienced a 30 percent increase in their median earnings in Washington State compared to a 29 percent increase in the U.S. overall.

Table 1: Change in Total Earnings by Sex for Washington State and the U.S.: 1989-1999

	Males				Females			
			Change	% Change			Change	% Change
	1989*	1999	1999- 1989*	(1999/ 1989*-1)	1989*	1999	1999- 1989*	(1999/ 1989*-1)
Mean								
Washington	\$32,482	\$37,230	\$4,748	15%	\$14,478	\$19,251	\$4,773	33%
U.S.	\$31,506	\$35,516	\$4,010	13%	\$14,621	\$18,750	\$4,129	28%
Median								
Washington	\$27,485	\$29,400	\$1,915	7%	\$10,227	\$13,300	\$3,073	30%
U.S.	\$25,312	\$25,600	\$288	1%	\$10,074	\$13,000	\$2,926	29%

* 1989 earnings shown in 1999 dollars

Change in Male Earnings: Washington vs. Other Western States

In 1989, California's male mean earnings were \$34,101 dollars, \$1,619 dollars higher than Washington's male mean earnings. Between 1989 and 1999, Washington's male mean earnings increased by 15 percent. In comparison, California's male mean earnings increased by nine percent. California's slower growth in male earnings caused the gap between California and Washington's male mean earnings to essentially disappear by 1999.

In both 1989 and 1999, Washington State had the highest male median earnings among the four western states examined. Washington and Idaho both experienced seven percent increases in male

median earnings. Oregon experienced a three percent increase in male median earnings. California experienced a six percent decline in male median earnings during this period.

Table 2: Change in Male Total Earnings for Washington State and Other Western States: 1989-1999

	1989*	1999	Change 1999- 1989*	% Change (1999/ 1989*-1)
Mean				
Washington	\$32,482	\$37,230	\$4,748	15%
California	\$34,101	\$37,299	\$3,198	9%
Oregon	\$29,549	\$33,050	\$3,501	12%
Idaho	\$27,728	\$30,824	\$3,096	11%
Median				
Washington	\$27,485	\$29,400	\$1,915	7%
California	\$25,568	\$24,000	(\$1,568)	-6%
Oregon	\$24,289	\$25,000	\$711	3%
Idaho	\$22,372	\$24,000	\$1,628	7%

* 1989 earnings shown in 1999 dollars

Change in Female Earnings: Washington vs. Other Western States

Compared to men, women had lower mean and median earnings in 1989 and 1999, but women experienced greater earnings growth during the period. Like the men, California had the highest female mean earnings in 1989, followed by Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. Between 1989 and 1999, Washington's female mean earnings increased by 33 percent while California's female mean earnings only increased by 19 percent. As a result of California's slower growth rate, the gap between California and Washington's female mean earnings declined from \$2,429 dollars in 1989 to \$832 dollars in 1999.

In 1989 California had the highest female median earnings at \$10,738 dollars, followed by Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. Between 1989 and 1999, California had the slowest growth rate (nine percent) of the four states examined. In contrast, Washington's female median earnings increased by 30 percent, Oregon's female median earnings increased by 35 percent, and Idaho's female median earnings increased by 56 percent during the same period. As a result of California's slow rate of earnings growth for women, both Washington and Oregon passed California female median earning value in 1999.

Table 3: Change in Female Total Earnings for Washington State and Other Western States: 1989-1999

		1989*	1999	Change 1999- 1989*	% Change (1999/ 1989*-1)
Mean					
	Washington	\$14,478	\$19,251	\$4,773	33%
	California	\$16,907	\$20,083	\$3,176	19%
	Oregon	\$13,121	\$17,408	\$4,287	33%
	Idaho	\$13,121	\$14,413	\$1,292	10%
Median					
	Washington	\$10,227	\$13,300	\$3,073	30%
	California	\$10,738	\$11,700	\$962	9%
	Oregon	\$8,915	\$12,000	\$3,085	35%
	Idaho	\$6,392	\$10,000	\$3,608	56%

* 1989 earnings shown in 1999 dollars

1. For more details on why mean earnings are often greater than the median earnings see: [Research Brief 26A: Total Earnings for All Adults Aged 18 to 64 in 1999](#).

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